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ABSTRACT

Futurists have predicted that in a globalized information economy, America's principal products will be education, publishing, the media, communications, management and administration, research and development, finance and insurance, and much of the work of the government. If this is so, academe will need to incorporate the realities of this globalized information economy into its structure, substance, and rationale. It must develop both a greater interdisciplinary capability and a willingness to integrate the workings of business and industry into the academy. An experimental seminar on the media and business, taught in Marquette University's College of Journalism (Wisconsin), took a cultural approach to studying corporate communication patterns by focusing on stereotypical views of business promoted by the media and vice versa, and the role of government in this relationship. This approach also allowed examination of American management as an industry in itself, one which can be viewed from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. The American corporation is well ahead of American academe in recognizing and planning for the information needs of the future, and must prepare itself, as management has, for rapid change. Looking at relationships within other cultures will be a crucial factor in success. (MSE)

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COMMUNICATION IN GLOBALIZED MARKETS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING APPROACH

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"COMMUNICATION IN GLOBALIZED MARKETS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING APPROACH" By Dr. Claire M. Badaracco, Marquette University

For the Sixth Annual Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions, Ann Arbor, Michigan, May, 1987

As American business searches for practical solutions among Japanese management techniques to ease its transition from the industrial to the information Age, it finds itself, as one businessman put it, "awake but not yet out of bed." If we take into account the assessment of futurists that in this globalized information Economy, America's principal product will be "education, publishing, the media, communications, management and administration, research and development, finance and insurance, and much of the work of government" (Ruch 259), then those of us in the Academic world -- so frequently differentiated from the "real" world of business decision-making -- will need to incorporate the realities of this globalized information economy into the structure, substance, and rationale of our thinking.

We live in a time of the post-specialist, if you will, when being able to cite the proverbial figure about angels dancing on pin heads makes us less brilliant, finally, than knowing how many other pins there are, and estimating the projected population of angels, not to mention knowing something about the communication and cultural values implicit in the structure of the languages they speak.

In a globalized market in the Information Age, some popular futurists have predicted, the university will replace the factory as the central institution of society. Lifelong education, retraining, job changes every one to five years may be the norm. Information will represent not only power, but wealth. The American economy will be based upon education, information and communication management in all sectors. Yet American companies have not achieved the same type of worldwide information-gathering program as have the Japanese [Toffler], and American educational institutions remain in the reactive, defensive posture they assumed in the early seventies when educational "relevance" crept into the vernacular.

The current debate raised by Secretary of Education William Bennett, and the Carnegie Institute's Ernest Boyer in his recent report on American Undergraduate Education, about whether or not the values of a professional school can be integrated with the values of a liberal arts education, more suited to the industrial rather than the Information Age.

If American education is to serve the future, it must develop not only a greater interdisciplinary capability, but a willingness to integrate the

work of the academy, with the realities of business and industry interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving are a reality if American education is to thrive, and not be bought out or taken over by a Japanese joint-venture, or other competitive political power that has demonstrated that it can provide a better system of education in a more cost-effective way in a globalized market. For who would claim in a time of escalating budget deficits and state and federal cutbacks in education that American Education is immune from the competition of global market forces. We have seen the-

Same

unthinkable-- the demise of American manufacturing-- become a reality, and with it, the massive losses of American jobs Who would say the same cannot occur in American education?

In an experimental seminar I have been teaching in the College of Journalism this semester, titled "Media and Business," an interdisciplinary class composed of students majoring in Business, Economics, Public Relations, Broadcasting, Spanish, and English, began the term by studying comparatively Japanese and American corporate communication patterns, using Willaim Ruch's superb study Corporate Communications, A Comparison of Japanese and American Practices, in order to elucidate cultural values, symbols, and signs. The American media use cultural symbols and signs to communicate about commerce -- they speak largely in "win/ loss" scenarios, in tv rather than technical language, about the stark black and white fortunes of the rise and fall of heroes or bums; that is the language of "Dallas" as much as Horatio Alger, and it is quintessentially American.

My premise is that media can only operate within the linguistic framework of the culture, so identifying what the media value can be a useful mirror in environmental scanning for business as it attempts to forecast trends, plan strategically for its public relations , and engage in proactive media relations in order to manage what appears to be a potentially "hot" issue that may have an impact upon its profitability, market share, image to consumers, or status vis-a-vis federal regulations or state laws that may affect its future health. The students' term papers were team project trend analyses of issues in four industrial groups, selected on the basis of student interest: the communications, financial services, advertising ,and beverage industries. I will apply the principals we used in the seminar here in order to examine education as an industry, and to provide some suggestion of how the interdisciplinary seminar operated.

The seminar considered stereotypical views of business that the American media holds, and in turn, the stereotypical view of the media that business has frequently held. Then we took up the role of government in this communication triangle in order to see more clearly the impact of corporate public relations, and of trade relations upon the public communication processes in the American marketplace. Not only corporations, but all institutions, are part of the nation's public information system. Business communicates with government through the media; by exposing politically sensitive information or business decisions, the media can exert influence upon the public policy arena.

Government reacts to this debate about itself and business in the media forum, and initiates laws, regulations, and rulings in order to curb or foster specific trends that can be equated with the existence of issues or news events. This relationship between government and business is a volatile one, highly reactive to political climates. The media, and public opinion shape those climates. In effect, the media consumer is the government's best customer, what Martin Linsky of the Harvard School of Government calls a "media democracy," in his book How the Press Affects Federal Policymaking, the second book we used ~~in the course.~~ The sophistication of this public communication process has resulted in the development of electronic lobbying and advocacy advertising in the marketing sciences, and of issues management, trend analysis, and futures forecasting in strategic planning, corporate communications, and the public relations functions in the management and decision sciences.

We began, as I say, with the objective of taking a cultural viewpoint, comparatively, toward US corporate communication patterns. Integral to that view was a linguistic approach. One must take into account, for example, the complexity of the Japanese written language -- with some 49,000 characters consisting of up to 48 strokes each, of which 1,850 are used in commerce, in order to understand why Japanese prefer verbal to written communication. Similarly, in the US, where our vocabulary consists of approximately 800,000 words, with 800 in marketplace usage, with some 14,000 definitions, strong bi and tri lingualism, and regional dialects, our culture, understandably, has tended to prefer to "get it in writing."

We began to talk about American commercial culture with David Whitten's very fine examination of The Emergence of Giant Enterprise in America, 1860-1914, the third required text for the course, which chronicled the rise of the five and dime, the A&P, the sewing machine, automobile, sugar, forest and communications industries. With that as a basis, we discussed the implications for spin-off industries, extending to the rise of motels, the global soft drink industry, and so forth, and even discussed the implications of these industries upon the American landscape, the era of

freeways, of highway signage, of neon, of roadside diners and drive-in movies -- all American commerical artifacts which have been exploited by the media.

Our secondary objective, no less important, was to understand American Management itself as an industry. As this audience is undoubtedly aware, in the history of American Management Theory, what was once called "business communication" was a slim chapter in a fundamentals textbook: now it is the whole book. All this has happened very fast. Seventy-five years ago, Frederick Taylor [191] ~~Scientific School~~ explained a profitable workplace as one which was dependent on such complexities as "planning ahead," and Frank Gilbreath [1914] conducted time and motion studies to tell employees how to move on the line or factory floor without wasting energy. Barely a decade later [1927] Elton Mayo and his associates [Fritz Roethlisberger, William Dickson] debunked Gilbreath's time and motion studies, at Western Electric, when they proved than the quality of changes in the workplace environment were less important than the fact that stasis was demoralizing, and led to reduced productivity. What workers need most to know is that they are perceived as human by management. This perception continues to inform the corporate communciation policy of such "giants" as IBM, particularly when it comes to downsizing operations [Wall St. Journal, 4/8/87, 1].

So for more than 50 years, American business has known that communicating about human needs in the workplace may have a greater impact upon the bottom line than mechanical operations of the plant, or actual job requirements.In the 40's German psychologists contributed to the growth of American Management theory the concept of two-way communication [Alexander Heron/Paul Pigors], and the importance of communicating upward. By the 1950's, choice of effective media for communicating in the workplace began to become a discipline. That time period is ~~both the [illegible]~~ the beginning of the Information Age, when more American workers were employed in white collar rather than blue collar manufacturing jobs. In the day and age when literature expressed the alienation of the American worker, such as in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, researchers began to establish that productivity could be directly related to how people felt about corporate climates.

In the last twenty years, the critical period of economic change in the shift from an industrial to an informational base, many traditional academic disciplines have jumped onto the management theory bandwagon. In addition to communication theorists, there have been social psychologists, anthropologists, linguists, information systems technologists, who have contributed to the growth of this literature --- even literary scholars use the classics to demonstrate effective decision-making to executives in summer seminars.

Two observations might be relevant here: first, it is in the theory of management that we can find evidence of a successful interdiciplinary approach in academe; second, there is no similar, correlative development of an interdisciplinary body of management theory concerning academe itself relevant to the future of American Education as a business. In effect, academics have made something of a business of commenting about how business ought to be managed. May I suggest that it is extremely important, for the future of academe, that business begin to examine and comment about how the academy manages itself. For we do not have in higher education a similar, professionally progressive history of concern about educational management, about workplace values, about the conditions that are conducive to productivity in workers (and by workers I mean both professors as well as students) that a scholarly chronicle like William Ruch's, cited above, ~~has done~~ represents for American Business

The management theories Ruch recounts, which evolved in the American workplace, did not spring full blown from American culture, but from the competition for American manufactured goods in a worldwide economy. If the future American economy will be based upon education, information and communication management in all sectors, American companies do not yet have a globally competitive attitude toward information-gathering. To an extent, if I may generalize, the attitude of American companies toward information is too greatly influenced by the example of our government, which would confine, restrict and classify into "secret" categories information which should or should not enter the public policymaking/media forum, not all of which is militarily significant. American business is still recovering from the view that information, which is power, ~~which~~ belongs only to an elite, and that workers do not necessarily have a "right to know" what they do not "need to know," an attitude toward information which is influenced by government's. Perversely, ~~the~~ American education falls somewhere behind American business in this regard, and it is this outmoded attitude toward information which epitomizes the argument of both secretary of education William Bennett and the Carnegie Institute's Ernest Boyer, as well as many of the contemporary arguments over freedom of information and academic integrity that go on as part of the daily fare of academe.

American education is light-years behind the American corporation in it's long-range planning for the influx of information that lies ahead, in its acceptance of the demographics of the Information Age. Life in an Information Economy will be "almost totally different," according to Ruch who draws upon the work of several scholarly futurists, as well as the mass culture writers Toffler and Naisbitt. "We're heading into a period where change is the norm," he declares, where both the scope and rate of

change will be areas where we will see unprecedented activity. As well as the population explosion, particularly among third world, poverty countries, there will be an accelerated accumulation of knowledge which will, according to futurists, double every year by 1995. By the year 2040, with some 200 million new books published since 1975, a library will need 5,000 miles of shelving to store just one copy of those books.

Where will academics be in all of this? Preserving the classic canonical literature that has been considered sacred for centuries? If academics produce even a miniscule part of those 200 million new books, what sector of the society, and what parts of the global economy will be producing the majority of those publications? How will the rapid acceleration of information change how university professors teach students to retrieve, assimilate, use, control, manage and communicate the information produced in those volumes?

The university's tenure system, which Americans borrowed from medieval Europe, when it needed to compete with the superior, more sophisticated image of "old world" education during the 19th Century, works to accommodate stasis rather than change. The cost to American education, in lawsuits, in the lost generations of scholars, and well-documented, widely-publicized, "ruined lives" would throw many packaged products enterprises in Chapter 11. Should global competition put the American educational system in a position to fight for market share, the theory that the tenure system produces a "higher quality of faculty" might one day be regarded by some, as a management principle as naive as Elton Mayo's turning on and off the lights at the Western Electric plant in 1927, and concluding that workers were more productive in a darkened room. In a globalized information economy, where rapidly accelerating change is endemic, inflexible management principles that reinforce stasis will put the institution in danger of becoming obsolete.

According to a February '87 *Issues Management Letter* published by the Corporate Information Center, which tracks public exposure in the national media of key topics, "educational management" is off the charts, as the media is pre-occupied by the short term crises that have characterized the past year of the Reagan administration. But I am taking a futurist's stance, for purposes of argument, using the techniques of environmental scanning that detect issues in their infancy, before they emerge, before they make their way into the media, get "hot" and are unmanageable. As my seminar learned this semester, among the most important principles of the Media and Business relationship is an ability to read analytically the consumer, trade and popular print publications, to spot that news item on page 9 of the first section, or on page 3 of the second section, and use the muliplier effect, projecting forward the event or incident or potential issue on a 6-18 month timeline, then on a 2 to 5 year timeline. If that "buried" item received more notice, if the spotlight of public attention were to focus

upon it, what would be the CONSEQUENCE for business, or government?

~~upon it, what would be the consequence for business, or for government?~~

~~As~~ Journalism is said to be the process of "self-education," and the process of this journalism seminar has ~~served to~~ added to my own. At first, I was interested in the interaction among corporate relations/external communication practitioners, and the impact of business upon the formation of economic and fiscal policy that was conducive to its health. I had the perspective that business contributed substantially to the climate of government. While it is too easy to conclude (though we all readily do) that media is both a gatekeeper of information and the watchdog over government corruption and a vital part of the check and balance system in a democracy where corporate America has a great deal of influence, as the seminar continued, it became clear that the overwhelming number of issues that become "hot" through the spotlight of media attention, and result in restrictive or regulatory rulings, are for the most part, unanticipated.

The information as well as the electronic technology to anticipate these events or issues has been around for more than a decade. Yet business is becoming educated to the cost-basis need for electronic scanning of information, print and broadcast media, for maintaining futurists as part of their strategic planning operation on a case-by-case basis, as they find themselves embroiled in costly damage control, or in a defensive lobbying position, a very expensive proposition. Undoubtedly the AIDS epidemic will have an impact upon how businesses regard strategic planning, media scanning and issues management, as important to cost containment--particularly among the financial services industries (and there are other crises we could name).

Finally, it is not what we pick up through scanning that will ~~save the day~~ determine our future, for business or for educational institutions, but what we can learn from another culture's way of seeing. Whether it is the relationships within an organization, its notions of human potential, of connectedness, of mutuality -- or of interdisciplinarity-- this is the most important way we have of transferring technology, and it is rooted in a humanistic approach to management theory. For it only becomes clear to us who we are, what we value, and how we see things when we are confronted with a gobal view: and that, in a nutshell, is the beauty as well as the rub.